

Cross Keys United Methodist Church

2017 Lenten Devotional

Week 6

Monday, April 3

Matthew 8:5-13

*When Jesus heard this, he was amazed and said to those following him, "Truly I tell you, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith."
Matthew 8:10*

When I think about Matthew's account of the centurion with great faith, I am reminded that Jesus said, "And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son." (John 14:13) Like the centurion, we may believe in the healing power of God yet, sometimes feel that we do not deserve to be in the presence of God who is holy and pure. Despite the terrible suffering of his servant the centurion's faith in God remained strong and he remained humble before the Lord. I really admire that. In my own life when I am experiencing a difficulty for longer than I would like, it is often hard for me to remain strong in my faith. Yet, I am learning that it is often the difficult times that cause us to turn to Christ. Our sins may make us feel as though we don't deserve the healing that we may desire but our faith in God reminds us that he is faithful to those who trust in him.

At times when our suffering is prolonged, we may wonder, does God even care? I have seen multiple people throughout my life that really needed healing and I questioned why is healing not happening? Then I remember the words of Jesus "Don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows." (Matthew 10:31) What a powerful reminder that God does care and he provides for us even during our most difficult times. God

always answers our prayers, but not necessarily according to our timetable or in the way that we expect. I am convinced that God will use our trials to grow our faith and to draw us closer to Him. Even Jesus was astonished at the faith of the centurion. No matter how great our trials may be, let's trust God and surprise him with our faith.

Jaimie Godwin

Tuesday, April 4

Matthew 9:1-7

"But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins." Matthew 9:6a

This year members of the Junior and Senior High Youth Group were challenged to wrestle with several Bible passages that pertained to healing. We are pleased that our youth are diving into God's Word and that they were willing to share some of their thoughts with us. The youth were glad that they were asked to contribute; they enjoyed digging deeper, and feel welcomed as an important part of our church.

In this passage some men brought to Jesus a paralytic man lying on his mat. Jesus saw their faith and then told the man that he was forgiven. Some teachers who saw this didn't think Jesus had any right to forgive sins. Everyone was surprised when Jesus then told the paralytic to get up and go home—and he did. Jesus did two things that were very powerful; he forgave and he healed. Sometimes we may need forgiveness more than we need healing. No matter what your sins might be, you can be

forgiven and healed. Sometimes it might be harder to ask for forgiveness than to ask for healing, but through faith God can do both.

Zachary Polo

Wednesday, April 5

2 Corinthians 6:16-7:1

*Therefore, since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.
2 Corinthians 7:1*

Is it possible that we can be so worldly, self-absorbed, and near-sighted that we cannot see that all that we are afflicted with, all that is hurting us, all that is causing us pain and discomfort, all these things and a multitude more, are all due to sin in our lives. Issues in our society; strife within our families; discontent with our lot in life; illness, sickness, and disease; these all come about as a result of sin in the lives of our ancestors, others who have hurt us, and even in ourselves.

The good news is that through faith the Holy Spirit lives in you. With the life-changing power of God working within you can overcome! Perhaps one of the challenges of Lent is to come out of the world. As we contemplate Jesus' sacrifice on the cross, we are called to so purify ourselves both in flesh and spirit. Remove the rags of sin in your life. In so doing, we let the healing begin. We let faith take us home. Let's fear the consequences of sin and, trusting in God, let's and work toward becoming the pure and holy children of God and the church that God wants us to be.

Jerry Furniss

Thursday, April 6

Acts 14:8-11

*Paul looked directly at him, saw that he had faith to be healed and called out, "Stand up on your feet!"
Acts 14:9b-10a*

What I found most interesting about this story is, 'Paul looked directly at him, saw that he had faith to be healed.' How do you see faith? Well I think you see faith almost the same way you would see what is in someone's heart; simply by the way they act or treat other people. Paul could tell this man had faith and offered him healing without even asking if he wanted it, just based on the fact that he could tell he needed it and he had the faith to receive it.

Since the theme of this year's Lenten devotional is healing, I want to reflect on the healing that one may need in their own lives. This could be physical healing, which is what Paul gave to the man. This type of healing can be seen or diagnosed by a doctor through testing that will show one has been cured of their illness. Physical healing is easily recognized and people are usually aware they need it.

We may need healing that cannot be seen or diagnosed, such as healing of a hurting heart. A hurting heart is like when your child moves a little over a thousand miles away from you and you only get to see them two or three times a year. Could also be when someone you love dies or when you simply see others you love hurting. This could even be when someone says or does something that hurts us.

Spiritual healing needs to occur when things aren't going right and we turn away from God or question our faith. We need to be able to recognize when we

need that healing. We need to have faith that we can be healed by the only one who can truly heal us.

The hope is you find healing this Lenten season, in whatever form you may need it.

Tina Hegeman

Friday, April 7

1 Peter 5:9-10

And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast. 1 Peter 5:10

As we waited for our sixth granddaughter to be born I was reminded of the wait for our second granddaughter, Rebecca Faith. Mid pregnancy we learned that Rebecca had a heart condition called hypoplastic left heart syndrome or, half a heart. The prayers began to flow, for healing, for strength, for the doctor's wisdom as this journey began. When Rebecca was born, she survived her first surgery and we were so excited! Making a working heart from what she was born with would require several surgeries but the first one was successful! She had the most beautiful thick, dark hair, soft skin and these cute little heart-shaped big toes. Little did we know those toes were an indication of another syndrome, one that added a weak heart. Just so happens (Ha!) a world renowned geneticist was in the area and she was asked to come confirm the doctor's suspicions. I happened to be in the room with Rebecca when she came into the NICU. She gently touched Rebecca's hair, ran her fingers over her forehead, lifted her little hands to see her fingers and then caressed her big toes. She turned to the nurse and nodded. That was it, the very moment my

heart broke. Rebecca Faith was born on April 6th and went to the arms of Jesus on April 7th.

So began a season of grieving. Our daughter and son-in-law, as well as our extended families enjoyed the short time we spent with Rebecca. We look to the day we see her again but we still miss her terribly. While we are never sure of the kind of healing God will answer our prayer with, I was disappointed that physical healing was not to be for Rebecca. If you had asked me then if my faith was shaken I would have told you no. I just couldn't separate the fact that while my mind accepted God's supreme plan, my heart was torn.

Time marched on and we found ourselves on vacation in Ocean City. We had long wanted to hear Matt Stokes, a Christian radio personality and pastor of Calvary Chapel in O.C., preach. It was a horrible rainy day, parking was almost unavailable and the chapel was full. We found seats and were excited when Pastor Matt came bouncing to the pulpit. Imagine our disappointment when he introduced the man that was to speak for him that day!! But God was in control and that was the day I first heard the scripture that began the healing process in my heart.

The substitute (I call him that but I know now that he was the speaker God had prepared for me) began a message that was interesting but not necessarily personal. About 10 minutes in, his message took a different turn! He began to talk about 1 Peter 5:10, how **God knows we are suffering**. Who better to understand the pain that comes with the death of a child than the One who gave His son to die for us? **Our suffering has a time limit**, a "little while". While we do

not know how long that is, the God of all grace does and I am convinced it will be very short compared to eternity. While we will never forget Rebecca, I think of her most often with memories of the joy she brought and a curiosity about how she will appear to us when we see her again. Then we come to the BEST part! ***That Christ Himself will RESTORE us and make us strong and steadfast.*** Restore, a beautiful word. Not only will He take me back to where I was, He will set my faith upon a rock, giving me the strength to resist the storms around me, making me steadfast in pursuit of His will until the time we are reunited in grace. Salvation does not guarantee that we will not experience discouragement, grief, pain and suffering here on earth. While our faith eases the pain in this world, it will all be completely erased and we will be fully restored in Glory!

So whatever is causing you pain in this moment, be comforted by the knowledge that God knows you are suffering, He knows the duration of your pain and will begin your restoration here on earth.

Karen Johnson

Saturday, April 8

James 5:14-20

The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective. James 5:16b

In Scripture we get to read a lot about individuals that were ill, sometimes very ill, and in some cases even dead, receiving incredible, supernatural healings. Scripture gives us some instructions "If anybody is sick they should call the elders of the church, and let them pray over

them, anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord." Scripture also states that the prayer of faith will save the sick and the Lord will raise them up, and if he's committed any sin they shall be forgiven him. A lot of healings that we read about in Scripture the Lord many times has made mention about sins being forgiven, and about the sick being saved. After these events comes the healing. It seems like sin can have a hold on us not just spiritually but also physically. It's necessary that on a daily basis we present ourselves to the Lord asking that our sins be forgiven. Even those sins that we are not aware of, offenses that we may not have realized we committed. It would seem that the acknowledging of our sin and our request for its forgiveness is how our prayer for healing should begin. I don't understand this to mean that if one of us is suffering a grave disease we must be hiding some sort of terrible sin, but rather our pleading for the forgiveness of our sins is a form of acknowledgment of Jesus being our Savior. It opens the way for a clean heart, mind and soul to then approach the throne of grace and plead for our healing or the healing of someone we know. Elijah is mentioned in this portion of Scripture, and wow, does this man of God have a list of astounding, supernaturally answered prayers. We are to approach boldly and confidently the throne of grace. And we are to believe that HE IS, and that He is the rewarder of those that diligently seek him. Pray on!

Betty Chapman